

# Travelbulletin

Giving agents the edge



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IN FREE DRINKS

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# ARE YOU READY TO BRING ON BIMINI AND WIN?

You've heard the whispers. You've seen the hype. Now it's time to Bring on Bimini for yourself. Simply book your Sailors on any Virgin Voyages sailing between now and 26 February, log your booking through First Mate Loot and earn 6x more Loot, that's £30 per sailing! Every booking also enters you a chance to win a place on a hosted luxury voyage through the Caribbean.

**FIRST  
MATE** | *Loot*

BY VIRGIN VOYAGES

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A man and a woman are sitting at a table in a restaurant, clinking glasses of orange juice. The woman has curly hair and is wearing a gold halter top. The man has a beard and is wearing a white shirt. They are both smiling. The background is a dark, textured wall.

# EARN 6X MORE FIRST MATE LOOT IN 2026!

What better way to kick off 2026 than with 6x the First Mate Loot? Until 26 February, you can earn £30 per booking for every confirmed booking when you log it with First Mate Loot. That's 6x more than our typical offer! Simply book your Sailors on the award-winning, kid-free voyage of their dreams – any length, any destination – log it, and earn. It's as easy as sipping champagne in the sunset.

**FIRST  
MATE** | *Loot*

BY VIRGIN VOYAGES

START EARNING AT [FIRSTMATELOOT.CO.UK](https://firstmate loot.co.uk)





# *with* *Love* *from* THE CARIBBEAN

Swap out gloomy and gray for the perfect sunny day on any of our iconic Caribbean itineraries. Stretch out beside the blue waters at our exclusive Beach Club at Bimini, explore the colourful coast of Mexico, or adventure in any way your Sailors choose – now sailing from San Juan and Miami.

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*Virgin*  
**VOYAGES**  
BRILLIANT FOR YOU



# Travelbulletin

Giving agents the edge

## Caribbean

Say goodbye to the winter blues with the latest offerings under the Caribbean sun.



### MORE IN...

#### Peaks News

The busiest selling time of the year has officially begun! (Pg. 4)

#### USA

The latest openings and experiences ahead of a milestone year stateside. (Pg. 15)



A fam trip that gave back to the people of Jamaica. (Pg. 12)





Newmarket  
HOLIDAYS

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THIS  
WEEK**NEWS**

Your first headline round-up of the year!

**PUZZLE BULLETIN**

Try and win an M&S voucher by entering our sudoku!

**CARIBBEAN**

Escape the January blues in this winter sun hotspot.

**FAM TRIP**

The JTB invited agents to see first-hand the country's resilience in the wake of Hurricane Melissa.

**USA**

Stateside staples gearing up for their biggest year yet!



# 2026 IS HERE!

**As the New Year is upon us, ANTOR has shared its Travel Trends report for the year ahead.**

ANTOR HAS released its 'Destination Trends Report 2025/2026', highlighting the factors shaping the UK travel choices heading into the New Year. Considerations around the cost of living, changing weather and political landscapes all play a role in influencing travellers' behaviour.

The report shows that 76% of ANTOR members have seen an uplift in tourism from the UK market by 11% compared to 2024, with UK outbound tourism also performing well.

In terms of where travellers are spending their holidays, ANTOR reports that holidaymakers are increasingly seeking better-value sunshine destinations closer to home. Destinations in southern and western Europe are performing strongest compared to pre-pandemic levels, while short-haul city breaks are showing declining results compared to 2024. While long-haul hot spots, including the

Caribbean and West Africa, remain below pre-pandemic levels, they are showing strong signs of a rebound, while holidays to Asia continue to perform well.

Extreme changes in weather and the cost of living pressures have meant off-peak travel is becoming more popular with UK travellers, with winter travel in 2024 the only quarter to outperform 2019 levels.

Not only is the tide turning for the time of year UK travellers are choosing to go on their holidays, but also the type of holiday they are embarking on, authentic and luxury experiences are becoming increasingly popular with younger generations, with 'more local experiences' and 'more trips to lesser-known destinations' forming the top trends for 2026. Searches for 'luxury experiences' is on the up, reflecting a growth in higher net-worth travellers willing to spend more on their holidays.

Travel  
bulletin

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## New Year savings from Scenic and Emerald

SCENIC AND Emerald have launched a multi-brand 'New Year Savings Event', giving travel agents a fresh opportunity to secure strong-value bookings across both river and ocean programmes.

The promotion applies to new bookings made up until February 16<sup>th</sup>, 2026, and covers a wide range of itineraries sailing between 2026 and 2028. Savings of up to

40% are available on selected departures, spanning European rivers, luxury yacht cruising and ultra-luxury ocean voyages.

MD of sales and marketing Nichola Absalom said, "Whether discovering Europe's iconic rivers or sailing vibrant coastlines, every voyage promises a memorable experience at unbeatable value."



### Have it all with HAL

HOLLAND AMERICA Line's wave campaign, running until February 26<sup>th</sup>, 2026, promises stateroom upgrades, free parking and reduced kids' fares on 'Have It All' packages across its fleet.

Karen Farndell, Holland America Line's associate VP of sales and marketing, said

the offer "is one of our biggest promotions yet [...] By combining savings with benefits such as stateroom upgrades, free parking for our popular Dover itineraries, and onboard spending money, we're giving guests more flexibility to shape the holiday they really want."

### ABTA to inspire consumer confidence during peaks

THE 'BOOK it' phase of the association's ongoing Travel with Confidence campaign runs until early February 2026, and hopes to capture consumer demand and instill the confidence to book with an ABTA member.

Graeme Buck, director of communications, introduced the campaign. "The peak booking period is vital for our members and we want to do all we can to support them. Our research shows just how much trust people place in ABTA members [...] The 'Travel with Confidence' campaign is designed to build on that trust. One phase of last year's campaign brought a 74% increase in people using our member search on [abta.com](http://abta.com) – demonstrating how it drives interest in booking with ABTA members. This year's activity is about continuing that momentum and supporting members during the peak booking season."



## Save £500 with Havila Voyages

GUESTS CAN enjoy savings of up to £500 across all of Havila Voyages' 2026 and 2027 sailings.

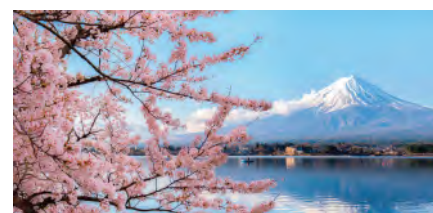
Matthew Valentine, global head of sales, highlighted the importance of supporting agent partners with new offers "to encourage sales during the key wave period [...] that's why we have discounts available on every single sailing!"

The discounted offers apply to all cabin

types and will automatically be added to all trade bookings made by March 15<sup>th</sup>, 2026.

Sustainability will be a driving factor for the cruise line heading into the New Year, with a plan to phase out LNG ships by the end of 2027.

Matthew added, "Agents can book their clients with us, knowing they will be travelling on the most environmentally responsible ships on the Norwegian coastline."

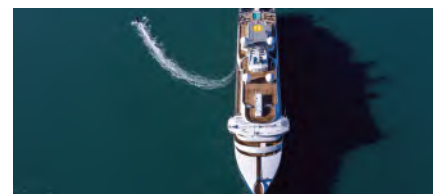


## Wendy Wu kickstarts the New Year

SAVE UP to £1,680 per person in Wendy Wu's New Year sale, available until spaces are full.

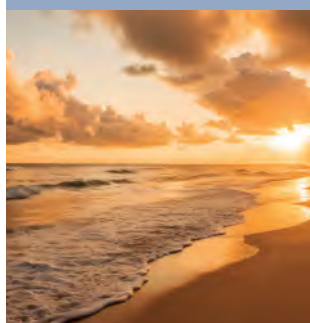
The operator is offering free return flights on selected 2026 and 2027 departures; free or half-price single supplements for solo travellers across all destinations and tours; and no regional flight supplements when flying from Glasgow, Edinburgh, Newcastle, Manchester, Birmingham or Belfast.

Agents also have the chance to win a place on a Jordan fam trip with every booking entered into a prize draw.



THERE IS only one week left to enjoy Club Med's New Year sale discounts of up to 15% off across its sun, sea and ski offerings. Bookings must be made by January 16<sup>th</sup>, 2026, for travel until November 27<sup>th</sup>, 2026.

One of the properties included in the sale is brand-new Club Med South Africa Beach & Safari, opening in July, with prices leading in from £1,787 per person for seven nights.



## NJT reports Boxing Day booking boom

NOT JUST Travel has reported a 20% year-on-year increase in Pre-Christmas and Boxing Day sales, with Christmas Day and Boxing Day bookings up nearly 30% compared to 2024.

Steve Witt, co-founder of Not Just Travel, said, "Large operators who launched early with their Peaks campaign on December 19<sup>th</sup> have seen an early spike in sales, with some operators up as much as 175% for the same period last year. Our consultants were primed, on their phones and ready to make the most of these optimal booking conditions [...] The rise in early bookings gives us extreme confidence of a very busy Peaks period ahead."

## Guernsey anticipates growth from new BA route

STRONG EXPECTATIONS for 2026 come following British Airways' announcement of new year-round daily routes to the Islands of Guernsey from London Heathrow beginning in April.

Sam Claxton, marketing manager at VisitGuernsey, said, "The new route is a fantastic opportunity for more visitors to access the incredible holiday opportunities our islands offer.



Whether coming for a short break or longer holiday, the new route means greater flexibility and choice for all visitors."

## Swan Hellenic elevates voyages

THE CRUISE line has unveiled its Elevated Expeditions offer, giving guests the chance to save up to £1,150 per person and enjoy \$500 onboard credit.

One cruise included in the sale is the 20-night expedition voyage from Ushuaia to Cape Town, voyaging across three continents from £10,510 per person, departing on March 5<sup>th</sup>, 2026.

Bookings must be made by February 28<sup>th</sup>, 2026.



## Sovereign lines up UAE luxury

LUXURY HOLIDAY curator Sovereign has expanded its offering by marking its presence in the UAE for the first time, with three new destinations for holidaymakers to choose from: Dubai, Ras Al Khaimah and Abu Dhabi.



The decision comes as 2025 saw a 13% rise in UK tourism to Dubai.

Sovereign's new offering features stays in prestigious properties along the Persian Gulf, including Atlantis the Palm, Emirates Palace Mandarin Oriental, and Rixos Al Mairid Ras Al Khaimah.

Heather Green, head of product at Sovereign, said, "Adding the UAE to our portfolio marks an exciting milestone at Sovereign as we expand into a highly sought-after market. We're committed to evolving with customer demand, and the UAE represents the perfect step in our long-haul journey.

"We look forward to welcoming travellers to our luxury holiday collection, where they can enjoy breathtaking beaches, world-class shopping, and the rich culture that makes the country so unique."



**FOLLOWING** A successful launch of its summer 2026 roster, Jet2 has announced its winter 2026/2027 programme from London Gatwick. Featuring 24 destinations, including 15 winter sun, five ski and four Christmas market destinations, the new programme from the airline's 14th UK hub is expected to provide agents and holidaymakers with huge amounts of choice and flexibility for their next winter getaway.

## MSC reveals revamp ahead of World Cruise

READY FOR winter sailings in the mediterranean ahead of the 2026 MSC World Cruise, *MSC Magnifica* now features two new speciality dining venues, a redesigned spa and fitness centre, and an expanded outdoor area.

While guests can enjoy the aforementioned upgrades immediately, the MSC Yacht Club experience will only be available from the summer once *MSC Magnifica* sets sail for her

Northern Europe itineraries.

The ship has already set sail on her 2026 World Cruise odyssey, which will last until May 2026. The vessel will also embark on the 2027 World Cruise sailing, visiting 45 destinations over 121 nights.

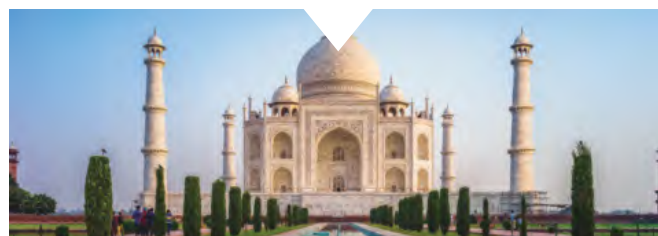
Bookings for the 2028 edition of the cruise are now open, promising guests a 115-night journey visiting the Med, the Caribbean, Australasia, Asia and the Arabian Peninsula.

## Explore Worldwide launches Big Blue Sale

TRAVELLERS CAN take advantage of up to 20% off on over 2,000 departures as Explore Worldwide launches its Big Blue Sale.

Running until January 21<sup>st</sup>, the offer spans across a vast selection of 2026 departures, including the 11-night 'Silk Road of Uzbekistan' from £1,236 per person; the eight-night 'India's Golden Triangle' itinerary from £556 per person; and the eight-night 'Cycle the Dalmatian Coast' trip from £1,356 per person.

The sale spans Explore Worldwide's diverse portfolio of classic discovery, walking, cycling and family adventures across the globe.



## Four new tours join Just You's portfolio

SOLO SPECIALIST Just You has revealed four new tours to coincide with its latest brochure launch. The new tours will take guests to Germany, France, Scotland, Greece, Türkiye and Canada, with 12 departures scheduled in 2026 and 2027.



# Spend less. *Experience more.*

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*all 2026*  
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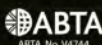
Every. Single. One.

*Book by 16 February 2026*



For more information and to book:

**01283 901 098 | [rivieratravel.co.uk/agents](http://rivieratravel.co.uk/agents)**



Riviera Travel booking conditions apply. See website for full details.



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**Are your Sailors ready to embark on the voyage of a lifetime?**

With over 150 bucket list destinations around the globe, Virgin Voyages offers unforgettable itineraries that simply can't be beat. This month we're setting sail with our best offer yet – 80% off a 2nd Sailor + up to \$400 in free drinks for them to celebrate!

LEARN MORE AT [FIRSTMATES.COM](https://firstmates.com)

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SUDOKU

### WIN A £20 M&S VOUCHER IN THE *Travel* bulletin

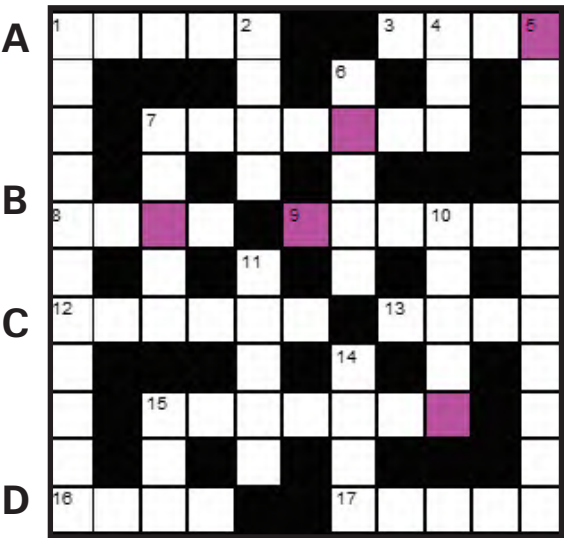
#### SUDOKU PRIZE PUZZLE

Fill in all the squares in the grid so that each row, column and each of the 3 x 3 squares contains the digits 1-9. Once you have completed the puzzle, simply identify the numbers that relate to the letters, A, B, C and D then e-mail the solution, with your name, company name, and full postal address plus phone and ABTA number if applicable to:

**competition@travelbulletin.co.uk**

Closing date for entries is Thursday, January 22nd. Solution and new puzzle will appear next week.

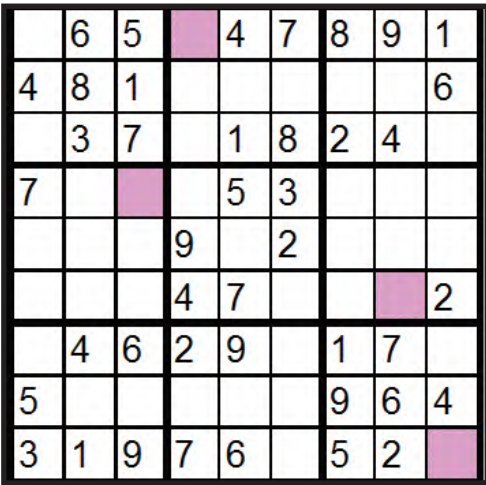
**December 12th Solution: A=6 B=8 C=4 D=2**



WHERE  
AM I?

THIS PORT town on the north coast of Jamaica is lined with hotels, a cruise ship harbour, rainforests, rivers and a famous waterfall.

FILL IN THE CROSSWORD TO REVEAL THE MYSTERY LOCATION HIGHLIGHTED BY THE PURPLE SQUARES.



- Across**
- 1 Premium tour operator and exclusive travel partner of John Lewis (5)
  - 3 Surname of Roman and Harley Moon who won BBC's 2025 Celebrity Race Across the World (4)
  - 7 Helena is the state capital (7)
  - 8 The longest river in the world (4)
  - 9 City, once known as Bombay (6)
  - 12 Turkish mount with biblical connections (6)
  - 13 Musical instrument and national symbol and emblem of Ireland (4)
  - 15 Historic city close to Madrid with an iconic Roman Aqueduct (7)
  - 16 English city, home of the National Railway Museum (4)
  - 17 Airline with hubs at Zurich and Geneva airports (5)

- Down**
- 1 Former Lioness who recently lifted the Strictly glitterball (5,6)
  - 2 Scottish island and P&O cruise ship (4)
  - 4 East Midlands international airport code (3)
  - 5 Southeast Asian archipelago composed of more than 7,000 Pacific islands (11)
  - 6 Capital of Liechtenstein (5)
  - 7 Mediterranean island with historic links to the Knights of St. John (5)
  - 10 Lloret de Mar is a popular resort on this Costa (5)
  - 11 Florida location renowned for diving, Key \_\_\_\_ (5)
  - 14 Major car rental company (4)
  - 15 Idris Elba was granted this title in the New Year Honours List (3)

CROSSWORD

Across: 1 KUONI, 3 KEMP, 7 MONTANA, 8 NILE, 9 MUMBAI, 12 ARABAT, 13 HARP, 15 SEGOVIA, 16 YORK, 17 SWISS.  
Down: 1 KAREN CARNERY, 2 IONA, 4 EMA, 5 PHILIPPINES, 6 VADUZ, 7 MALTA, 10 BRAVA, 11 LARGO, 14 AVIS, 15 SIR.  
Mystery Word: PALMA



# *The Islands of the* **BAHAMAS**



Sixteen unique islands and countless cays await, sprinkled across the world's clearest waters. Find just what you need and do as much or as little as you want.

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# PLAYA'S PEAKS PERKS

20% discounts can be had across Playa Hotels & Resorts portfolio during Peaks season.



SIGNIFICANT SAVINGS can be had across Playa Hotels & Resorts' portfolio this peaks period, with agents able to save their clients up to 20% across its Dominican Republic and Mexico properties.

Some of the resorts included in the offer is the Secrets La Romana Resort & Spa in the Dominican Republic. Guests

## Dine with authenticity in Barbados

TRAVELLERS LOOKING for a more authentic Barbados experience away from the sun, sea and sand can now experience genuine Bajan life through the relaunch of the 'Dine with a Bajan' programme. The unique initiative invites travellers to savour authentic Barbadian cuisine while enjoying the warmth and hospitality of the locals in their own homes.

Guests can choose from eight hosts who will share their traditions, dishes and stories. The initiative goes beyond cuisine: it is an invitation to discover Barbadian culture in an authentic and intimate way.

can immerse themselves in the all-inclusive, adults-only resort for a serene break on the south coast. Steps away from the property is the secluded beach overlooking the crystal clear blues of the Caribbean sea, promising a romantic haven for couples looking to reignite their spark or celebrate their love. Along with the resorts signature Unlimited-Luxury experience, guests can also unwind in the two outdoor pools, a luxurious spa day and all-fresco dining.

If travellers are looking for fun for all the family, the Dreams La Romana, Dominican Republic, offers something

for everybody, from its waterpark with white-knuckle tube slides and meandering lazy river to the extreme water sports at the beach. The resort offers a picturesque environment to spend quality time together as a family while basking in the sun. A Kids Club is also available for children ages four to 12, and a Teen Club for those aged 13 to 17. While the kids have their fun, the adults can sit back and relax in the luxurious setting.

The 20% offer is available to book until February 10<sup>th</sup>, 2026, with travel valid between January 4<sup>th</sup>, 2026, and March 31<sup>st</sup>, 2027.

## Ride the Wave with MSC Cruises

AS WAVE season approaches, MSC Cruises is offering savings across its summer 2026 and winter 2026/2027 itineraries. During the sales period, guests can sail the Caribbean from £2,359 per person aboard *MSC Seaview*, visiting Kingstown, Saint George, Fort-de-France, Pointe-a-Pitre, Basseterre and Roseau. Departures are scheduled for December 15<sup>th</sup>, 2026.







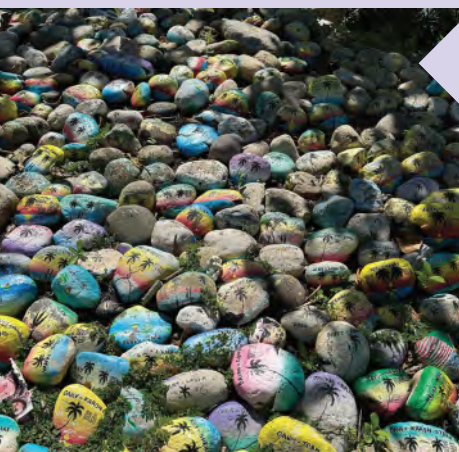
## Jamaica 'Stronger Together' fam trip

*TRAVEL BULLETIN*, along with seven travel agents, were invited to Jamaica to provide charitable relief to the communities affected by Hurricane Melissa.

From December 5<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup>, 2025, the group visited a selection of hotels that are ready to welcome back guests to the beautiful island (more information on those across the page) and had the privilege of providing Christmas gift bags and charitable items to the members of the Philadelphia Life Centre.







## COUPLES SAN SOUCHI

IF YOUR clients are looking for a romantic hideaway nestled into lush vegetation against the waterfront, look no further than Couples San Souchi.

The resort places relaxation and escapism at the forefront of any getaway, providing a serene atmosphere for guests to let go of their everyday stresses and lose themselves in the tranquility.

Boasting a colonial style aesthetic in each of its 150 rooms, the resort sets a striking picture against the backdrop of the Caribbean sea, complete with private spa rooms, an outdoor gym/training area, golf course and even local turtles who pop up to say hello. It is no wonder this property has one of the highest repeated guest figures across the Caribbean, with each returning customer able to decorate their own stone to the ever-growing display.



## RIU OCHOS RIOS

THE ISLAND vibes have returned with a bang at RIU Ochos Rios! From the tunes blasting into the lobby to the vibrant atmosphere at the pool and waterpark, guests can party from dawn 'til dusk in the heart of Ochos Rios.

Providing both an unforgettable setting for family fun and a rambunctious retreat for the adults, the resort is a perfect choice for guests looking to unwind in a different way and dance the days away under the sun.

With more than 900 rooms across the property, revamped family suites, a restaurant that takes guests around the world, pool activities, and jaw-dropping views over the rolling hills, this resort is a must for those travellers looking to keep the rum punch flowing and the vibes pumping.

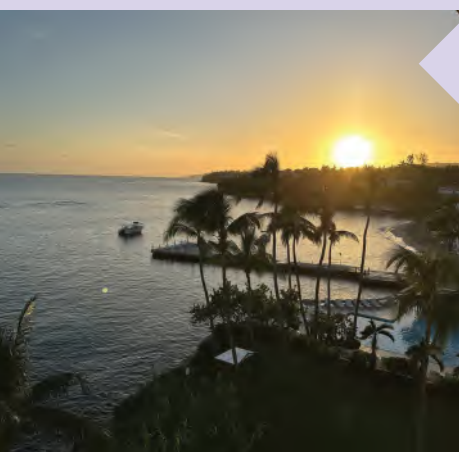


## JAMAICA INN

OLD WORLD charm meets timeless elegance at the family-run Jamaica Inn. After welcoming some of history's greatest figures (Marilyn Monroe and Winston Churchill to name a few), this historic gem has maintained its original charm from the 50s, with its own modern twists.

A quiet serenity fills the air around the property, creating an indulgent essence that has to be experienced to be believed. The property boasts 52 rooms and private cottages, a secluded spa, al fresco dining under the sunset, a fully stocked library, and to top it all off, Shadow the welcome dog to greet each guest with a wag of her tail.

Time slows down at the Inn, encouraging guests to take a moment for themselves and bask in the intimacy and allure of the hotel.



## COUPLES TOWER ISLE

THE HOST hotel for the fam trip, Couples Tower Isle provided us with stunning sunrise views, wonderful food and unmatched hospitality from all the staff.

With 226 rooms and suites, numerous eateries (including one specialising in authentic Jamaican cuisine and a fine dining experience), daily programmes full of activities, and spa facilities, this hotel is the perfect choice for travellers looking for a bit of everything on their holiday, from lively party evenings to tranquil relaxation by the sea.

On-site watersports are available, including kayaking, paddleboarding and catamaran adventures, as well as options for sunset cruises and journeys to the remote island located off the resort's beach.

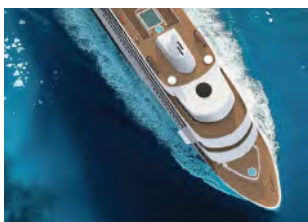




### Spice up your clients' life

GRENADA'S SPICE Island Beach Resort is inviting travellers to enjoy its coveted Private Pool Holiday Retreat for 20% less on stays before January 31<sup>st</sup>, 2026.

The Retreat includes 20% savings on accommodations in a private pool suite sanctuary, complimentary round-trip airport transfers and in-suite room service. Guests will be welcomed with Grenada's famous spiced rum paired with dark chocolate for a perfect indulgent escape in paradise.



### Star Seeker readies for inaugural season

STAR SEEKER has officially joined Windstar Cruises fleet and is ready for her inaugural season in the Caribbean this month.

The 224-guest luxury yacht will embark on January 15<sup>th</sup>, 2026, making calls to the Dominican Republic, the British Virgin Islands, and San Juan, as well as a series of small ports larger vessel can't reach. *Star Seeker* marks the first new build in Windstar's Star Class.

## Sandals reopens in Jamaica

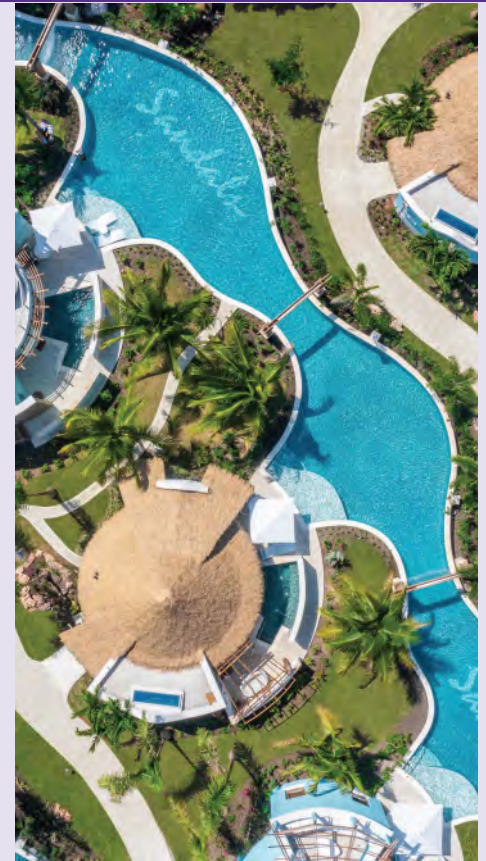
FIVE OF Sandals' properties reopened last month in Jamaica after the effects of Hurricane Melissa, with the remaining three properties penned to open on May 30<sup>th</sup>, 2026.

Sandals Resort International's executive chairman, Adam Stewart, reported "a real sense of momentum across Jamaica right now.

"Our airports are open and welcoming flights from around the world. Tours and attractions, including the iconic Dunn's River Falls, Negril's famed Seven Mile Beach and Mystic Mountain for fans of Jamaican bobsledding, are all ready and waiting for you."

This year will mark the 45th anniversary of Sandals Resorts; Jamaica has been the home of the brand since it opened its first property, Sandals Montego Bay, on the island in 1981.

"Our guests love this island, and when



they come back, they'll feel that same magic the moment they arrive. Jamaica is ready to welcome them home," Adam concluded.

## Caribbean cruises to Christmas number one

CRUISE SPECIALIST cruise.co.uk has completed a customer survey revealing the huge appetite for a Christmas spent at sea.

71% of travellers have said they are open to enjoying their Christmas dinner at sea, while one in five respondents say they will 'definitely' embark on a Christmas cruise within the next two years.

For ocean voyages, the Caribbean is at the top of the wish list over the festive season, with 24% favouring its warmer temperatures and beach getaways over the UK's abysmal weather. The biggest draw for embarking on a Christmas cruise is the

hassel-free nature of voyaging, followed by the joy of spending Christmas in a warmer climate.

Tony Matthews, managing director at cruise.co.uk, said that Christmas cruising is becoming "an increasingly attractive option for a broad range of travellers.

"For many, the appeal lies in removing the stress that can come with the festive season, while still enjoying a memorable holidays—particularly as cruise ships embrace the festive season onboard with seasonal dining, themed entertainment and special celebrations.

"The strong demand for the warm weather of the Caribbean reinforces the wide range of choice for holidaymakers—whether that's sunshine, sightseeing or simply switching off."





# OLD MEETS NEW

As America kicks off its 250th anniversary celebrations, where better to celebrate with a heavy dose of 'Phill-good' spirit than Philadelphia, where America's old meets its new



PHILADELPHIA HAS long been celebrated as the city of many American firsts; it might just be the city of many of the nation's best, too, with its culinary, historical and cultural relevance spanning further than the cheesesteak and *Rocky* might have you believe.

There is no starker metaphor for Philly's old-meets-new spirit than its

most photographed attraction: atop the 72 steps leading up to the near-150-year-old Philadelphia Art Museum stands a bronze statue of a victorious Rocky Balboa, commissioned by Sylvester Stallone himself just before *Rocky III* came out in 1982.

Admission to the Philadelphia Art Museum is included in the commissionable Go City pass, alongside other attractions that weave the nation's 250-year story, including the Museum of the American Revolution, which houses George Washington's original tent from the Revolutionary War, and the Betsy Ross House, which brings to life the

story of the first Stars and Stripes.

It is not all Founding Fathers and Stars and Stripes: Philadelphia's underdog spirit platforms the paradox of the American Dream. Those stories stand to attention at the African American Museum, which showcases the Black experience throughout history, and the President's House, an exhibit on the former site of George Washington's house which unpacks the first President's slaves and the role the slave trade played in writing America's story. *Get your Phill with more at [www.travelbulletin.co.uk/news/philadelphia-where-americas-old-meets-its-new](http://www.travelbulletin.co.uk/news/philadelphia-where-americas-old-meets-its-new)*

## Cincy sees additional BA service

BRITISH AIRWAYS has confirmed its direct service from Heathrow to Cincinnati will take flight on larger aircraft and welcome an extra flight a week between March and October 2026.

Six flights a week will now depart from Heathrow to Cincinnati/Northern Kentucky International, representing an annual capacity boost of around 60%.

The larger aircraft will now offer 48 business suites, 40 premium economy seats and 184 economy seats on each flight.

The six-weekly operation, taking flight daily bar Thursdays, takes to the skies from March 29<sup>th</sup>, 2026 until October.

## A Specialist New Year

SPECIALIST HOLIDAYS Group's peaks campaign runs until the end of January: Each agent booking earns entry into a prize draw for a luxury fam trip with American Holidays.

Bookings with the US specialist qualify for £200 off multi-centre itineraries with three or more different hotels, and £100 off twin-centre and cruise-stay bookings.



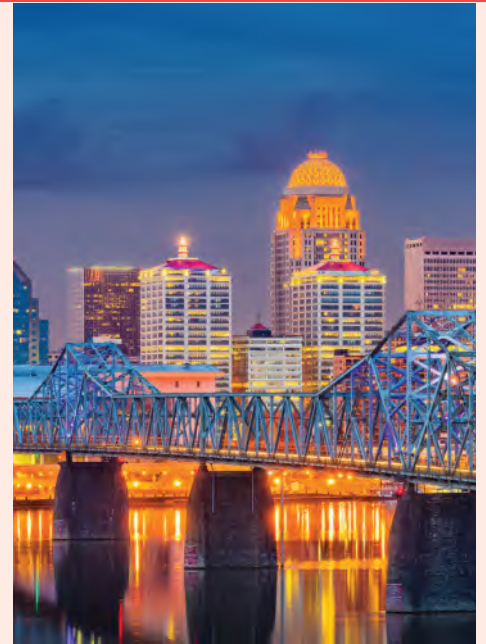


## A big year for Louisville

IN WHAT promises to be a blockbuster year for Louisville, the city is unveiling a host of new attractions and celebrations as the nation prepares for America250.

2026 will see the \$22 million expansion at the American Printing House for the Blind come to life with the Dot Experience, aiming to become one of most accessible museums in the world. The expansion features tactile, audio and braille-rich exhibits, including the largest repository for Hellen Keller's archives, a piano once played by Stevie Wonder, and one of the six remaining copies of Louis Braille's 1829 manuscript. The expansion will open in Autumn this year.

Set to open in late 2026, the AHOY Children's Museum will become the first museum in Louisville especially for children. The building is a \$4 million Victorian house-



turned-adventure featuring indoor and outdoor experimental play.

The largest theme park in Kentucky will complete its £25 million upgrade in Spring, showcasing new lands, new rides and the debut of its first new rollercoaster since 2019: Flying Fox, becoming the park's sixth rollercoaster.



### Explore Utah after dark

UTAH IS home to the largest concentration of International Dark Sky Parks (26 as of last year), making it a first-class destination for astro-tourism. With more travellers eager to look out into the stars, Utah has expanded its nocturnal experiences to teach visitors about the dark skies, including new stargazing workshops.

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# Wildlife Retreat at Taronga

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## Ocean Holidays promises new agent platform in 2026

AFTER ANNOUNCING its biggest-ever peaks marketing campaign, doubling its 2024 spend, Ocean Holidays' director of sales Matt Rains spoke to *Travel Bulletin* about the operator's success and plans for 2026, including a new agent portal.

While Matt's sights are firmly on 2026, 2025's success was foundational to future trade plans. "It has been a fantastic year across the board... it is great to finally [its first brochure] out there, sitting in hundreds of agencies nationwide. The feedback has been brilliant, and it has helped our partners secure more bookings to the USA."

Matt revealed that Ocean's trade business has doubled in the last year, which "says a lot about the team we have here at Ocean Florida and the partners we work with."

The goal for 2026 remains clear: "Our aim is always to make life easier for agents and support the growth of their businesses."

Those plans will soon come to light; Matt promised "several major promotions... that will make a real impact." After peaks, the operator has "plans to expand our destination portfolio," and will finally launch "the answer to our new most-asked question... we will open our travel agent booking portal!"

*More from Matt at*

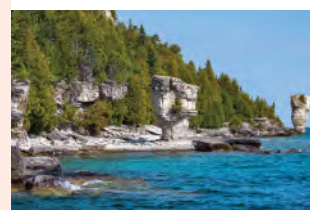
[www.travelbulletin.co.uk/news/ocean-holidays-promises-new-agent-platform-after-agent-success](http://www.travelbulletin.co.uk/news/ocean-holidays-promises-new-agent-platform-after-agent-success)



### USA retains RateHawk ranking

RATEHAWK HAS reported its top five outbound destinations booked by its UK agent partners over the Christmas break, with the United States ranking second, only to the UAE, for Christmas break bookings.

While 35% of bookings came for European Christmas breaks, and an overall decline to the USA, the destination evidently still remains a big player in the UK travel scene. Unsurprisingly, Orlando and New York led the popularity of the States over the Christmas break.



### Audley partners with Ponant

TAILORMADE OPERATOR Audley Travel has partnered with Ponant for a pair of land-cruise itineraries, one of which takes in the Great Lakes region.

The 15-day 'The USA's Great Lakes with a Ponant Cruise' itinerary starts from £11,100 per person, and blends two-night stays in both Chicago and Toronto with a nine-night Ponant cruise throughout the Great Lakes.



## Atlanta's Civil Rights stories

ATLANTA'S NATIONAL Center for Civil and Human Rights has now reopened after an expansion worth over \$50 million, which saw the addition of several expanded galleries.

The museum, which is included on the commissionable CityPASS in Atlanta,

opened in 2014, and stands to celebrate, commemorate and collate the stories of those involved in America's ongoing human and civil rights struggle.

Two new museum wings and several interactive exhibits have been added, as well as a Special Exhibitions Gallery.



# Georgia unveils World Cup travel guide

EXPLORE GEORGIA has begun its countdown to the FIFA World Cup with a dedicated 2026 Georgia Travel Guide, a 130-page document showcasing the stories to be told long after kick off.

Georgia governor Brian Kemp introduced the guide. "As a record number of travellers choose to spend time in Georgia, this travel guide will provide them a glimpse into the people and places that make this state so great.

"Whether the Peach State is their destination or they are just passing through, we hope this resource inspires our visitors to keep Georgia on their mind as they learn about everything we have to offer."

The guide includes a fold-out state

map, trip-planning tools, and a range of sample itineraries to make more out of the matchdays for those making the trip to the World Cup this year.

The guide can be downloaded online.

2024 saw 174.2 million visitors head to Georgia, inspiring over US\$45 billion in visitor spending.



## Lake Tahoe's resort transformation

VISIT LAKE Tahoe is celebrating a wealth of resort renovations and new experiences in 2026.

Caesars Republic has undergone a US\$160 million reimagining, embedding a 'mountain-modern' spirit into its 740 guestrooms, the Golden Nugget Lake Tahoe has wrapped up a full remodelling of all its Sunset Tower rooms ahead of ongoing renovations to the Heavenly Tower due to be completed this year, and Gurney's Resorts closed in November ahead of a comprehensive reimagining.

### How did you ring in the New Year?

**Jeanette Ratcliffe**  
Publisher

[jeanette.ratcliffe@travelbulletin.co.uk](mailto:jeanette.ratcliffe@travelbulletin.co.uk)  
Fireworks party with friends!



**Simon Eddolls**  
Sales Director

[simon.eddolls@travelbulletin.co.uk](mailto:simon.eddolls@travelbulletin.co.uk)  
Drinks and canapes locally.



**Sarah Terry**  
Account Manager

[sarah.terry@travelbulletin.co.uk](mailto:sarah.terry@travelbulletin.co.uk)  
Watched the fireworks with family.



**Tim Podger**

Account Manager - Far East  
[tim.podger@travelbulletin.co.uk](mailto:tim.podger@travelbulletin.co.uk)  
On a bridge with family watching fire-works.



**Matthew Hayhoe**

Assistant Editor  
[matthew.hayhoe@travelbulletin.co.uk](mailto:matthew.hayhoe@travelbulletin.co.uk)  
On a beach in Florida.



**Melissa Paddock**

Events Coordinator  
[melissa.paddock@travelbulletin.co.uk](mailto:melissa.paddock@travelbulletin.co.uk)  
Had a quiet one with friends.



**Holly Brown**

Events Coordinator  
[holly.brown@travelbulletin.co.uk](mailto:holly.brown@travelbulletin.co.uk)  
Not a lot.



**Leah Kelly**  
Deputy Editor

[leah.kelly@travelbulletin.co.uk](mailto:leah.kelly@travelbulletin.co.uk)  
Had a games night with my family and was asleep by half past midnight.



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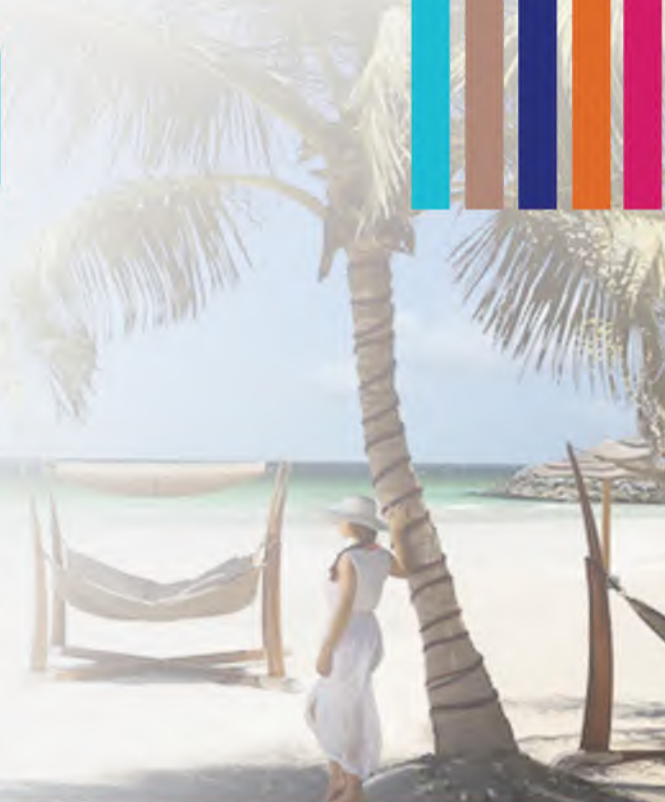
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